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EXIT

Intros & Conclusions

Beginning & Ending Your Essays

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The purposes for why we write may be different, but the intended result always is the same:



Writers must interest their readers and engage them early on.

Intros are the first bit of your writing that readers see; if they're not interested after a few lines, you may have already lost them.

Consider this: you go on a date.

The first half hour is a complete bore, and you already know you'll never see this person again.



The same goes for writing: be uninteresting in your intro and you've already lost most of your readers (and your professor too).



Functions of an Introduction:

- make the reader interested in reading on
- reveal the essay's central idea as expressed in the thesis
- provide background & explanatory information to help the readers understand the essay's *purpose*

Most importantly!

If you're bored writing it, your readers will be bored reading it...



So don't be boring!



Methods of Introductions (*traditional essays*):

- **use a startling remark, statistic, or memorable quotation** - this can be a quote you found about the issue at hand or a startling statement that you come up with to engage your readers.
- **ask a question or present a problem** - address your readers directly to engage them and get them thinking about the issue at hand. Just avoid addressing the reader ("you") in the body of the essay.
- **challenge a widely-held assumption or opinion** - challenging a widely-held belief engages your readers and makes them want to read on. Provide explanation for your challenge later on in the essay.
- **tell an anecdote or describe a scene** - engaging your readers' senses. Write a mini story that puts the readers into the world of your claim. Let them feel like they're seeing the world you're discussing.
- **provide your own definition of an important term or concept** - don't just go to a dictionary and pull a definition from it. Dictionary definitions are dull. Think up your own definition and provide a more interesting start to your essay.

The Literary Intro:

Hook the reader:

There are many ways to hook readers, but one of the more useful is using a memorable quote from the literary work. You could also do some research and find other quotes by the author too. Just make sure you provide some context for the quote.

Introduce your interpretation:

Briefly summarize your interpretation of the story's (or poem's) theme. This will prepare your readers for the arena of discussion you've put together for them and will help them better grasp your upcoming points (this all helps with *coherence* in writing).

Provide Explanatory Information:

Let your readers know why you think this story (or poem) is important: how might it impact their lives or reveal something about the world in which we live? This context is great for engaging readers right off the bat.

NOTE: these methods are NOT mutually exclusive. You can mix and match.

Just be aware that using too many could take away from the intro's effectiveness and clarity.

Intro Don'ts:



- don't announce your ideas: “The purpose of this essay is...” or “In this essay I’ll discuss...”
- don't refer directly to the assignment; use your own way of phrasing things.
- don't announce or apologize for your lack of knowledge: “Even though I’m not an expert...” or “I don’t know much about this, but...”

Conclusions

A conclusion is just as important as an introduction.

Imagine that you go on another date, and it goes well. You both walk outside, and, suddenly, your date bails.



All you see is the silhouette of a body walking onto the night. No goodnight, no thank you, no I had a good time. Nothing.

Ending the essay should wrap things up for your readers, making them feel like everything has been finished.

Closing an essay effectively is important so your readers don't feel like you've left them standing on the corner with no ride home.

A good conclusion can also solidify your readers' understanding of the point you're trying to make, enhancing *Coherence*.

Functions of a Conclusion:

- leave your reader satisfied that the discussion is complete
- give readers something to think about or act upon
- remind readers of central idea or thesis of the essay
- look backwards: summarize and rephrase the most important elements of support from the body of the essay

Methods of Conclusions:



- **offer advice or make a call to action** ~ *discussing a problem or issue without offering a solution can come across like empty complaining. Offer a solution for any problems you've discussed.*
- **ask a rhetorical question** ~ *a rhetorical question is a question for which the answer is obvious or for which you don't expect an answer. Craft a question that relates to your thesis.*
- **close with a memorable statement or quotation** ~ *the same concept that applies to including memorable statements in your intros applies here.*
- **respond to a question in your intro** ~ *if you asked a question in the intro of your essay, don't leave your readers hanging. Answer it.*

Conclusion Don'ts:



- don't simply repeat thesis ~ rephrase it or rearticulate it so as not to be repetitive
- if you repeat key ideas, don't sound "listy"
- don't include any totally new supporting information
- don't preach or use clichés

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